GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
WATER RESOURCES
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:38
ANSWERED ON:15.07.2002
SCARCITY OF WATER
JAYABEN B. THAKKAR

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news- item captioned "Wrong Policies led to water scarcity" appearing in The Hindu" dated May 29, 2002;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein;

(c) whether an expert from Maharashtra had undertaken a survey in 12 States to prepare a basic treatise on land and water resources development;

(d) if so, the outcome thereof;

(e) whether the Government have accepted the suggestion made by the expert; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon ?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SMT. BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY)

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The figures and statements reported under the news items are not based on facts. As per the latest assessment made by Central Water Commission (CWC), the average annual water availability in the river- systems of the country is assessed at 1869 Billion Cubic Metre (BCM). Ofwhich, 690 BCM of surface water and 432 BCM ofgroundwater is utilisable. Presently 605 BCM of water is being utilised for diverse purposes.

Through the concerted efforts of Central and State Governments, anirrigation potential of 99.76 million hectare (provisional) is expected to have been created by the end of 9th Five Year Plan with the construction of judicious combination of major, medium and minor irrigation projects including 3596 large dams. These large dams provide 177 BCMof shortage of rainwater. Another 207.77 BCMof storage is likely to be created through ongoing and proposed projects. Besides, about 3,76,000 tanks (minor dams) and ponds have also been constructed to harness the water resources of the country.

To help the State Governments in their efforts to harnessthe water from natural resources and accelerate creation of irrigation potential by early completion of ongoing schemes, Government of India haslaunched Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP) since 1996-97. Under the programme, financial assistance in the form of central loan is being extended to State Governments to help them complete the ongoing irrigation projects in a time bound manner so that the benefits could accure at the earliest. Accordingly, the Central Loan Assistance (CLA) amounting to Rs.8480 crore to the State Governmentshave been provided under AIBP upto end of2001-02. The NationalWater Policy-2002 provides for private sector participation inwater resources sector to augment the financial resources for its development and management.

There are total 14,22,664 rural habitations in the country. Out ofwhich 12,65,093 habitations are fully covered and 1,40,208 habitations are partially covered by rural water supply and remaining 17,363 habitations are not covered. Besides, 88% of the urban population has presently been covered under urban water supply.

The per capita water availability is 1820 cubic metre per year (2001) on a national level. However, due to the spatial variability of rain in the country and also because of variation in population density, per capita average annual availability of water in different basins presently varies from 16,990 cubic metre in Minor River Basins Draining into Bangladesh & Myanmar; 13,636 cubic metre in Brahmaputra- Barakbasin to 298 cubic metre in Sabarmati basin. About 216 million people are having the per capita water availability of less than 1000 cubic metre annually.

Government of India is also promoting rain water harvesting (the traditionalwater harvesting systems) through Watershed Management Programme,artificial recharge of ground water and roof-top rain water harvesting under the sector reform project of Accelerated Rural WaterSupply Programme under the Ministry of Rural Development,for which technical and financial assistance is provided to the State Governmentsand other implementing agencies. Central Ground Water Board has taken up a Central Sector

Scheme on "Studies of Recharge to GroundWater" on pilot basis, under which 174 schemes have been approved in various parts of the country during Ninth Five Year Plan.

For meeting future requirements of water, as a long term measure, National Water Development Agency have formulated National Perspective Plan for water resources development which envisages interlinking between various Peninsular rivers and Himalayan rivers for transfer of water from surplus basins to water deficit basins which will accrue benefits of drinking water supply, irrigation, hydro-power, flood control, navigation, fisheries, salinity and pollution control etc.

(c) The Ministry of Water Resources is not aware of any survey conducted by an expert from Maharashtra as quoted in the question.

(d) to (f) Does not arise.